

WHO'S HUGH?

Oscars host, Broadway performer, producer, family man, dinkum Aussie bloke and clawed superhero. Jack of all trades HUGH JACKMAN talks about his latest gig as Marvel's cool and courageous comic book character in X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE.

Who do you think is more you, the song and dance man or Wolverine?

HUGH JACKMAN: Neither. The musical thing was a real surprise to me. See, I went to a theater school and there was a musical theater school in the same place. The musical theater school used to come and see us for comedy. Once or twice a year we all had to sing, and the musical students would come to laugh. So when I was cast in a musical, I was petrified, and I couldn't believe I got the part.

Did you know much about Wolverine when you were cast in the first film?

Nopé, knew nothing about him. Ignorance is bliss. I knew nothing about the comic book at the time. I was a cartoon fan. I watched cartoons. I don't think I ever read a comic.

So what was your introduction to it?

This. The movies. In fact, my wife, who's an actor, always reads with me the night before auditions. For *X-Men*, I got the faxed pages, and she reads: "OK, exterior woods day. Logan senses danger. His nostrils flare. Claws come out of his hands. Snikt." I say, "What?" She says, "Snikt! S-N-I-K-T, exclamation mark." She puts it down and goes, "Hugh, this is ridiculous. You're at the National Theater with Sir Trevor Nunn.

You can't be doing this." And it's the only time she's ever been wrong. According to her. Usually I take her advice, but that time I auditioned on the quiet.

And has it been a fun experience?

Ah yeah, super mate. When I got offered this job, not that I was getting any other offers at the time, I lucked out on one of the great comic book characters out there. He's cool, he's courageous, he's unbelievably conflicted and interesting and three dimensional in every way. And I still find him interesting after all this time. Obviously I do, otherwise I wouldn't still be playing him.

How much work was it getting the physicality right?

I had never been satisfied with where I got to physically in the *X-Men* movies. I had an image in my head. I wanted the audience to feel what I felt when I saw De Niro in *Cape Fear*. I didn't want people to go, "Wow, that guy looks like he works out." I wanted people to go, "This guy is a bit of a freak." I want them to feel danger, power. I wanted him to feel veiny, animalistic. That's what spurred me on. And I trained for about a year before the film, and obviously through the film. I was lifting heavy, heavy weights. I did a lot of cardio, sort of conditioning training. And I ate a lot of red meat. If there is some sort of karmic debt to be paid for eating animals, trust me, I am some kind of gnat in the next life. If I ever get a human embodiment again, it'll be a miracle.

Is it true you'd get up absurdly early in the morning?

Yeah. Part of the training was that I had to have a fully digested meal before I trained.

But the beauty of it is the only time I could have wheat at that particular meal. So I would have one piece of brown toast, and six egg whites at about 3:30, 4 o'clock in the morning. It was a sad picture. I'm still asleep, and wanting to be asleep because I knew I had to get back to sleep. So I didn't want to wake myself up. So I'd eat in a daze, and then back to sleep.

How did you wind down after the filming stopped?

Oh, this is just me. Not waking up at 3:30 in the morning, basically. Just living normally. I still train, but not to the same degree. I train to maintain because I like the way I feel when I do that and also, as Will Smith says best, "It's easier to stay ready than get ready." I see some actors who get in shape for a role, then let themselves go, and I just worry about their heart. Man, that has got to be tough on the body. I don't think the body actually wants to change that much. It takes a long time to go either way. So it's easier for me to stay in shape. Plus also I know in my head I'm going to want to go back on Broadway, and things like the Oscars came up with singing and dancing, and you never know when stuff like that is going to happen.

How did you enjoy the Oscars?

I loved it. I was nervous to do the monologue. I remember going to the production meeting two months out, and they had a paper with the 12 acts laid out. "Act 1, Hugh Jackman opening monologue, 7-8 minutes, cue commercial break. Act 2..." And I went, "OK, can we stop there? Can we elaborate on the 7-8 minutes?" And they told me it was pretty much whatever I want. Once I figured out what to do I felt better about it.



And on the night, I thought I'd be more nervous than I was. I really had a great time.

The mutton chops, did you grow those yourself?

Yeah, that's all me. I'm not sure I should admit that. I'm so used to it now. Without them I almost feel naked. When you put the baseball cap on with those chops, there's no way around it.

OK, here's a real geek question. Was there any talk about how Victor Creed in this film related to Sabretooth in the first *X-Men* film?

No. I never even brought it up with Liev. It's so obviously a departure. What was central to this movie was this relationship with the brothers and how they were a mirror image of each other. Even physically, he had the chops like Logan's. The decision was to make them as similar as we could to illustrate that point that they are two sides of the same coin. That their battle is an externalisation of the battle going on within. And Sabretooth didn't even talk in the first one, so we would have struggled to get through. And we know we had to go a different way.

What was the biggest challenge in making the film?

So many challenges. In many ways, this was the most challenging film I've ever made. What's especially hard is making a movie where you're drawing on comic books, so there's source material. Then you realise half the audience hasn't read the comics, so you have to make it accessible to them, as well. You have to make a movie that's appealing to young people, old people, men and women altogether and you have to find that balance. I wanted to become a producer so I could protect as much as I could the Logan that I liked. And I thought we had gone a bit soft by *X-Men 3*, so I wanted to go a bit darker. Give more edge to him. At the same time, I wanted to see him evolve. I didn't want to just go, "BANG! There he is." Ah, that's the Wolverine that we know. I wanted to see him evolve and understand the conflicts within him.

Do you think you'll get tired of playing Wolverine?

Probably at some point. Right now I'm OK with him. Actually right now I'm talking to writers about the Japanese saga. When I first started reading about Wolverine, I remember thinking, man, this is a movie! Right here, this is unbelievable.



Glenn Boswell may not be a household name, but as a stunt coordinator he is something of a linchpin on the making of action films. Hand to hand combat simulation, explosions, car crashes, wirework, to name a few elements, can all be part of a day's work in the stunt game.

In the last decade Boswell has worked as the stunt coordinator on *Dark City*, *The Thin Red Line*, *The Matrix* Trilogy, *I, Robot*, *The International* and most recently *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.

"Basically the stunt coordinator is responsible for all of the action required on the film," he explains, "and that includes safety requirements, the training of actors, the choreography, implementing the action, being creative and coming up with alternatives and new ideas for the directors."

"It's more of a technical job than a bravado job, if you follow my meaning."



"There has to be a lot of creative input from the stunt department in the choreography and the performance of action."

Boswell says his role expands or attenuates depending on the vision, as it is commonly referred within the industry, of the director. He usually consults the available storyboards and the previews before he goes to work.

"Initially it starts off with you collaborating with the director and also the actors by giving an idea on how the action should play," Boswell says. "We do a lot of rehearsing with the wirework and then go back and shoot it with the director and gauge his thoughts on that accordingly."

"Ever since *The Matrix* it has

evolved, especially with the onset of computer animation," he adds. "The stunt departments rely

on technology, more than ever. It's more of a technical job than a bravado job, if you follow my meaning."

Boswell has contributed recreations of some of *Wolverine's* more audacious stunts – notably the helicopter sequence – for the supplementary materials on the DVD and Blu-ray disc.

"Working on the DVD [and BD] is an entirely different process," he says. "But it's great fun and something I'm only too happy to do."